

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing iron ore agglomerates comprising agglomerating fine iron ore particles in the presence of a binder system that comprises a binder and an alkali metal silicate, wherein the alkali metal silicate is present in an amount of between 0.0001 to ~~0.080~~0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate, and wherein the binder system is free of synthetic polymer.
2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is carboxymethyl cellulose.
3. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and ~~0.080~~0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
4. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
5. (Currently Amended) A binder system suitable for producing iron ore agglomerates comprising carboxymethyl cellulose and an alkali metal silicate.
6. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 2 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and ~~0.080~~0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
7. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 6 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
8. (Previously Presented) The binder system of claim 5 wherein said alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.

9. (New) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is selected from the group consisting of inorganic binders, water-soluble natural polymers, modified natural polymers and mixtures thereof.